

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

SEX AND RELIGION

Landau, Rom. *Sex, life, and faith. A modern philosophy of sex.* London, 1946. Faber. Pp. 319. Price 21s.

ROM LANDAU, who is well known as a writer on religious experience and its relation to the problems of our time, here turns his attention to sex.

His particular qualifications in this sphere are: a wide, if somewhat superficial and patchy, reading in sexological literature, extensive travel, a position in the forces which has enabled him to collect a number of non-medical case histories, and a humane and sympathetic understanding of his subject.

He accepts the findings of modern psychology regarding the correct approach to sexual problems. He deplors the coercive and obscurantist attitude of organised religion. He sees the fatuity of expecting conformity to the officially recognised code of morality. He appreciates that any advance in sexual conduct must depend on an appeal to the free and enlightened consciences of men and women.

There are some blemishes. The chapter on "Sex and Race" is an exhibition of very unscientific racism based on tourist observations mingled with prejudice. At times the treatment accorded to the Germans descends to the level of the penny novelette. We are regaled with a portrait gallery of German sex criminals who are said to be more extreme and numerous than those of any other country; but the author does not attempt to prove that Jack the Ripper was a German. Two lengthy chapters on homosexuality are tolerant and humane. But the author rather spoils his case by treating homosexuals as if they were a closed college; whereas the problem they present to the most sympathetic observer is rendered difficult by the fact that they constantly attempt to recruit from heterosexuals and borderline cases. It is surprising that in a work of this scope no mention is made of the nudist

movement. And lastly, the book is so diffuse and unco-ordinated as to render the subtitle an idle boast.

It is the introduction of religion, however, that creates the chief difficulty of the book, and perhaps its chief interest. The author is a Christian who believes in the incarnation as a literal and historical fact. That event, he considers, rendered the integrated attitude of the classical world to sex for ever impossible. Naturally he looks to religion and spiritual enlightenment as the fundamental cure for sexual ills both individual and social.

There is nothing in itself deplorable about the introduction of religious considerations into the treatment of a theme of this nature. Dr. Blacker, in the July issue of the *EUGENICS REVIEW*, drew attention to the essentially religious elements in the make-up of the great Francis Galton. The enormous social and humanitarian advances of the last hundred years owe a great deal to motivation fundamentally religious in its nature, though often unconsciously so. The weakening of this element to-day may be contributing to the growing disrepute into which intellectual liberalism and the scientific attitude are falling. A great difficulty is created, however, when an author makes no distinction between a religious and a scientific fact. Mr. Landau might well consider whether, if his religious experiences are valid, it should not be possible to express their results in terms comprehensible to those who have not shared them, or who perhaps have seen the truth from another angle.

There is a great deal of muddle in the presentation of Mr. Landau's religious case. In the light of spiritual truth, we are told, monogamy is seen to be the best code. But it is never quite clear whether monogamy is not laudable even when practised by those who have not been vouchsafed this revelation. Again, if the psycho-analysts err in attempting to base a philosophy of life on a therapeutic technique, the author at times speaks of religion as if it were little

more than a method of effecting a "cure" for excessive sexuality. His "patients," by the way, appear to live in social milieu that Casonova would have envied. This may be true of the senior ranks of the services abroad; but such cases are not typical of what Richard Aldington has called "a country of sexual prohibition" where the average man or woman finds it difficult to obtain reasonable sexual experience under decent conditions. I rather suspect that Mr. Landau has sometimes been deceived by the tendency of the neurotic to exaggerate the enormity of his delinquencies. With regard to faith he says: "The birth of an illegitimate child, venereal disease, the breaking up of a marriage, a friendship, or a home, exposure to blackmail, social scandal—any of these, and a hundred other causes, may lead to the awakening." If faith is occasioned by such fortuitous and largely preventable calamities, are not materialistic explanations of its nature invited?

This work may be commended to the general reader for its interesting facts and its kindly commonsense. It has little to offer the specialist; and the religious motif will exasperate the theologian almost as much as the sceptic.

ALEC CRAIG.

PSYCHOLOGY

Deutsch, Helene. *Psychology of Women.*
Vol. I: *Girlhood.* London, 1946.
Research Books Ltd. Pp. xi+312.
Price 21s.

THIS is the first of two volumes on feminine psychology by Dr. Deutsch; the second will deal with motherhood. Although the title is "girlhood," the first chapter deals with the pre-puberty phase and subsequent ones are concerned with early puberty, puberty and adolescence and menstruation. Then five chapters are devoted to the various female psychoanalytical types and finally an important chapter is included on the influence of the environment. True to psychoanalytical theory, however, female behaviour both at puberty and in adult life is determined by the previous events of infancy and early life.

The examination of the adult psyche can therefore be made only in the light of what has gone before.

Dr. Deutsch formulates her understanding of women's psychology as the theme of a recurring triangle situation which has as its prototype the little girl's relationship with her parents. This recurs at puberty in the form of bisexuality, a struggle between homo- and hetero-sexuality, the latter winning through the pressure of developing physiological factors. But the struggle may be protracted and subsequently in adult life the characters of her loves and hates reveal the partial quality of that victory. The prototype situation contains the elements out of which the personality is forged. In the child-parent relationship there are many mothers and fathers; "there is a beloved mother and a hated mother; a sublime ideal mother and a disreputable sexual one; a mother who has castrated the father, and another who has been castrated by him; one who bears children and one who kills them; one who nourishes them and another who poisons them; there is the rival, and the personification of security and protection." So also there are many fathers. Operating within this framework of possibilities, the instinctual drives with their aggressive and masochistic components have the task of adjusting to the reality of the girl's real environment. The eventual personality development may be towards the feminine passive woman or the "active" woman with masculinity complex. There are many subtypes and many intermediate and mixed forms. Essentially the feminine personality is characterized by passive-masochistic instinctual drives, narcissistic components of the ego, and the emotional prerequisites for motherhood. Woman's capacity for identification is both her charm and her weakness. Her eroticism is dependent on a harmonious integration of these components and may be inhibited by the excessive development of any one of them. In most cases the interplay between narcissism and masochism explains the behaviour of feminine women. In the account of "active" types, Dr. Deutsch's theme is less convincing. She relies more on